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The Present Global Crisis Of Capitalism

PAUL M. SWEEZY

Confrontation and Coexistence

ANDREAS PAPANDREOU

Eleanor Marx: A Review

CHRISTINE STANSELL

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

A letter from a subscriber complains about our running the article on the then forthcoming French elections in the February issue without identifying the author. The writer doubts that there is such a thing as an "objective observer" and goes on to say that "this becomes all the more important when, as in the case of 'The French Left: Background to Elections,' the 'observer' is taking a definite position (in this case that of the Fernch CP)." We do not agree that there are no objective observers, though we would insist, as our correspondent probably would too, that in matters of this kind there are no neutral observers: in class society what passes as neutrality is on the side of the dominant class because it

(Continued on inside back cover)

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THE PRESENT STAGE OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

By Paul M. Sweezy

> The issue is the economic crisis—*la crise*. The phrase is omnipresent in political speech. By it are understood several things: high and persisting levels of unemployment and inflation; the sense that the economic boom of the postwar epoch is over; the knowledge that the economic policies of the boom can no longer ensure full employment.
>
> —Emma Rothschild, just returned from France, *New York Times*, Op-Ed page, March 1, 1978

The present economic situation in the world capitalist system is unique in so many ways that it can without doubt be called unprecedented. This is not to say that as a recession or depression it is "worse" than the Great Depression of the 1930s, only that it displays so many novel features—like the coexistence of severe unemployment and inflation—that comparisons with the past can be made only with caution and awareness of the

This is the latest version of an updated lecture delivered at the Metropolitan University, Mexico City, in January, and at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, in March.

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possibility of their being as misleading as they are helpful. It is the more important to point this out because what follows deals almost exclusively with the industrialized countries of the "center," while some of the most strikingly new aspects of the present situation relate to the underdeveloped "periphery" and to center/periphery relations. My excuse for this one-sided emphasis is partly lack of time, but even more that what happens throughout the whole system is crucially dependent on forces which originate in the center.*

I want to start with what I think is a very useful visual "picture" of the situation in the advanced industrial countries, i.e., a series of charts prepared by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a Paris-based "club" to which all the countries of the center belong (see pp. 4-5. All charts relate to individual countries, and they are all constructed on the same basis. The line at 1.00 represents that country's average post-Second World War rate of growth of industrial production (6 percent for France, 4.5 percent for the United States, 3 percent for Great Britain, etc.). Deviations above and below this line indicate years of faster or slower growth. The "normal" expectation of course is that growth will be below average in recessions and above average in periods of recovery, and that indeed is what the charts show for the years before 1974.

This changes dramatically in 1974. We have drawn a heavy line between 1973 and 1974; to the right of it are the years 1974, 1975, 1976, and the first three quarters of 1977—practically four full years. Look at this portion of the various charts, and you will see that 1974 and early 1975 were a period of sharp decline relative to the long-run growth rate. Recovery begins for most of the countries around the middle of 1975, a normal business-cycle pattern, and continues through 1976 and into 1977. But then an odd thing happens. With two exceptions, the United States and Italy, the recovery does not bring the growth rate up to the long-run average, and for most of the countries the line appears to be flattening out in the course

* A piece by Harry Magdoff focusing on developments in the periphery will appear in this space next month.

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of 1977 and looks very much as though it were about to turn down again, *still well below the long-run average*. The Italian case is unique in that it is the only one where the growth rate rose above the average by the end of 1976. This spurt, however, was brief, and the decline during 1977 was much sharper than in most of the other countries where the curve began to turn down in that year. Only in the United States did the curve go above the average in 1977 and remain there during the year. Of all the OECD countries, therefore, the United States stands out as a genuine exception, a subject to which we shall return presently.

In one sense what we have in these charts is obviously a picture of a cyclical decline and recovery of a kind which has always characterized the behavior of capitalism. But it is clearly much more than that. The normal pattern from past experience would be recovery from below average at the trough to above average at the succeeding peak. But here we see the apparent beginnings of a new decline with the growth rate still well below the long-term average. This is totally new in the post-Second World War period. Nothing like it has happened since the 1930s.

The consequences of this marked retardation of the growth rate have been numerous and varied. Here I will mention only the following:

(1) A growth in employment slower than in the size of the labor force. By the end of 1977 there were some 17 million officially counted unemployed workers in the OECD countries (the real figure, as in the United States, is undoubtedly much higher).

(2) A rise in idle productive capacity. In industry after industry operating rates—i.e., the percentage of productive capacity in actual use—have declined. This has been most marked in that most basic of all industries, steel. A dispatch in the *New York Times* of last May 23rd states: "From Lancashire in Britain through Belgium and the French Lorraine to the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr, Europe's steelmakers are now experiencing the worst crisis in living memory." And later in the same story we read, "Japan alone now has idle

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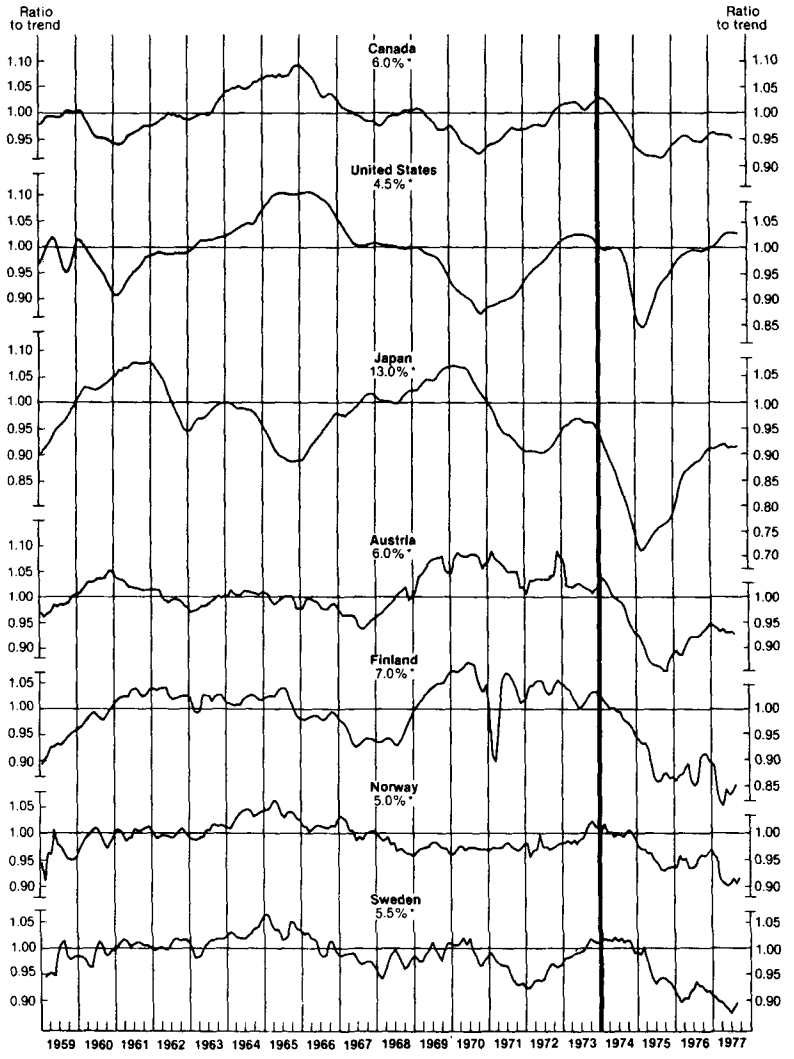
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION
Deviation from long-term trend



*Average annual trend growth rate
Source: OECD, *Main Economic Indicators*, December 1977.

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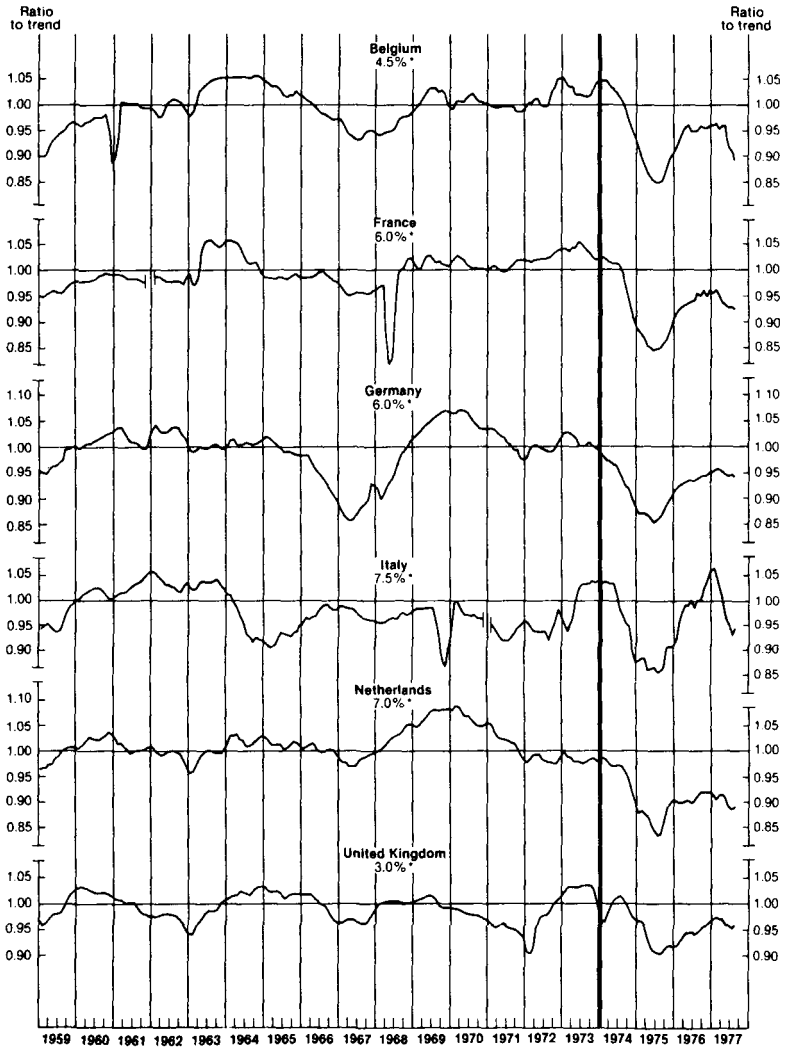

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plants capable of turning out 30 million tons of steel a year, or nearly a quarter of Common Market production." In the United States, during a period of economic recovery when an expansion of steel-making capacity would be normal, the steel giants have actually been closing down plants, the most publicized case being that of Youngstown, Ohio. Or take ship-building, an outstanding contributor to the whole postwar wave of prosperity. A front-page dispatch in the *New York Times* of March 6, 1978, begins: "Shipping industries in Western industrial nations and Japan are in deep trouble, caught by a lingering glut in global capacity that has idled a third of the world's tanker tonnage and cut the ship-building business in half." But while steel and ship-building are perhaps the most dramatic examples of worldwide excess capacity, they are by no means alone. Similar stories could be told of automobiles, heavy chemicals, paper, and many more.

(3) With existing capacity seriously underutilized in so many important industries, capitalists are naturally extremely reluctant to invest in new plant and equipment, as they did so freely during the prosperous 1950s and 1960s.

Retarded growth, rising unemployment, increasing amounts of idle productive capacity, lower levels of investment in plant and equipment—these of course all act on each other as cause and effect. But they do not, individually or in combination, constitute an explanation of the situation in which the developed capitalist world now finds itself. We shall come to the problem of explanation presently. But before we do that, a few words about the exceptional case of the United States are in order.

First, the line on the U.S. chart, while differing from the others in being above 1.00 in 1977, is still below what one would expect on the basis of earlier postwar experience: an increase in the rate of industrial production to around 3 percent above the long-run average in the third year of cyclical upswing is a pretty poor showing. And even this is based on special circumstances. By far the leading factor in the U.S. recovery has *not* been, as would normally be expected, capital accumulation, but consumption. As an indication of this dominance of consumption, we may note that between 1973 and 1977 per-

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sonal consumption expenditures (in constant 1972 dollars) increased by 10.8 percent, while nonresidential fixed investment (also in 1972 dollars) actually *declined* by 3 percent.* And the growth of consumption has been fueled by an extraordinary explosion of consumer credit (during the years 1970-1975 the annual net addition to consumer installment credit outstanding averaged $11.1 billion, while in 1976 the figure rose to $20.2 billion and in 1977 to $30.9 billion**). Nor is installment credit the only factor at work here. Homeowners in increasing numbers have been re-mortgaging their houses to take advantage of inflated real estate prices and spending the proceeds on all manner of consumer goods. Had it not been for this debt-based ballooning of consumption, there is no doubt that the performance of the U.S. economy would have been no more impressive than that of the other advanced capitalist countries. (Why this difference between the United States and the others should exist is an interesting question which I have not seen discussed in any of the relevant literature. My guess is that the reason is to be found in the longer history of consumer credit in the United States—linked to the earlier "automobilization" of U.S. society—and the more highly developed institutional mechanisms for promoting and supplying it.)

How do the establishment economists—in the universities, business, and government—explain this crisis which set in in 1974 and is now into its fifth year? In general, I think it is correct to say that most of them attribute it to a failure of government policies. What they believe would have been the right policies of course differs from one to another. Some think that an appropriate monetary policy would have avoided the crisis, others that fiscal policy holds the key. Many combine the two—monetary and fiscal policies. But on the whole they do

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* *Economic Indicators,* Joint Economic Committee, January 1978, p. 2. I omit from consideration here other differences between the United States and the rest of the developed capitalist world—e.g., the continuing huge deficits in the federal budget, and in the last couple of years the very large and growing excess of imports over exports. In any full treatment these (and other) factors would have to be analyzed and accorded their due weight.

** *Ibid.,* p. 27.

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not seem to believe, or even suspect, that the causes lie deeper in the structure of the capitalist system where they remain immune to manipulation or correction by methods made familiar by Keynes and his followers since the 1930s, and more recently by the monetarists, of whom Milton Friedman is the best known theorist.

I have to add, however, that bourgeois thought about the crisis is not only that of professional economists. There are others, less captivated or crippled by their formal training, who are beginning to see the situation in a different light. Here I will cite only one example, a striking one, that of Jay Forrester, a computer specialist and professor of management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who became famous a few years ago as one of the main authors of a widely publicized work, *The Limits of Growth,* sponsored by the eminently respectable (and bourgeois) Club of Rome. In the January 16th issue of *Fortune* magazine there is an interview with Forrester under the title "We Are Headed for Another Depression" (the context makes clear that he has in mind an experience similar to the Great Depression of the 1930s). Forrester has discovered the theory put forward in the early 1920s by the Russian economist Kondratieff who believed that capitalist history has been characterized by long cycles of some 50 years duration. That waves of accelerated and retarded growth exist is scarcely open to question, though whether they have the cyclical character attributed to them by Kondratieff is another matter, and in my view one which is not only of little importance but which can all too easily become a red herring. In the course of the interview, Forrester is quoted as saying, "The long wave is a process in which the capital-goods sectors grow to a size that cannot be sustained and then collapse."

This is clearly a very apt description of what has actually happened in the 1970s, and as such it is a good deal more enlightening than anything emanating from the professional economists, most of whom are still waiting for—and perhaps even expecting—a new boom in the capital-goods industries to put the economy on a sustained upward path again. But Forrester is no better than the economists in telling us *why* the

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capitalist system should behave in this fashion. And here we have to take leave of the realm of bourgeois thought entirely and seek answers in the Marxian analysis of capitalism.

The clue is to be found in understanding the nature of capital itself. Capital is not a thing, nor a sum of money, nor even only a social relation—though it partakes of all these. It is above all *self-expanding value*. In order to explain this—an idea, incidentally, which is totally foreign to all schools of bourgeois thought—we follow the notational language used by Marx in Part II of the first volume of *Capital* (entitled "The Transformation of Money into Capital"). We can imagine a society (which never existed in pure form) in which all production is by independent producers working on their own and selling what they produce to get the money to buy what they need. Each one produces a commodity C, sells it for money M, and buys other commodities which are also denoted by C. Circulation then takes the form C-M-C. In terms of exchange value C at the beginning and the C at the end are equal, but their use value is different (for the farmer, for example, the C at the beginning stands for grain and the C at the end for the whole basket of goods he needs to sustain the life of his family). The rationale of the operation is clear: production takes place in order to satisfy the needs of the producers. This does not, however, describe what happens under capitalism where production is initiated, organized, and controlled not by independent producers, but by capitalists who begin with money M, purchase means of production and labor power C (both are commodities under capitalism), and sell the product once again for money M. Here the circulation form is M-C-M. Since money is perfectly homogeneous and directly satisfies no needs, it follows that the M at the beginning and the M at the end can be distinguished only by their magnitude. If they are quantitatively equal, the operation is meaningless. Capitalism therefore can exist only if there is some way that capitalists can regularly sell their products for more money than they had to lay out to produce them. How and why this is indeed possible is of course explained by the theory of surplus value, which for present purposes we can simply take for granted. This being so,

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we can formulate the circulation process under capitalism as M-C-M', where M' is greater than M. This, however, represents only one production period. At the beginning of the second period the capitalist has more money than he had at the beginning of the first. Perhaps he will want to consume more than he did before, but basically the capitalist is interested not in consumption but in production, so we can abstract from this and assume that he begins the second period with M' and emerges from it with M" (which in turn is larger than M' And so on and on, with the Ms getting always larger and larger.

This is what is meant by capital as self-expanding value. The capitalist is, so to speak, its agent and functionary: by the nature of the position he occupies in production and society, he must always seek to expand the capital under his control. As Marx said, "Accumulate, accumulate, that is Moses and the prophets." The capitalist follows this imperative by maximizing the surplus value he squeezes out of the workers, and by investing in additional production as much as possible of the surplus value thus appropriated. The result is a double tendency: to accelerate society's power to produce while at the same time restraining its capacity to consume. The coexistence of tendencies to unlimited production and restricted consumption is a contradiction of the most profound kind. It is what prompted Marx to write:

> *The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself.* It is the fact that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and closing point, as the motive and aim of production; that production is merely production for *capital,* and not vice versa, the means of production mere means for an ever expanding system of the life process for the benefit of the *society* of producers. (*Capital*, Kerr ed., vol. 3, p. 293)

You might perhaps object that this theory purports to prove too much—not that capitalism is prone to crises, but that capitalism is impossible. But here we need to understand the difference between tendencies and what actually happens. Tendencies can be counteracted for shorter or longer periods of time, though if they are fundamental and inherent they sooner or later exert their dominance. The law of gravity is an apt

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example: if it were always operative in its pure form, there would be no such thing as an airplane. But no airplane can fly forever: sooner or later the law of gravity has its way. And so it is with the underlying tendencies of capitalism.

In certain historical contexts, capitalism's drive to unlimited expansion of production can operate freely and with only occasional or minor setbacks. Such was the case in the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution and the opening up of new continents as the context. Such is the case in major wars and the periods following major wars when so much that has been destroyed needs to be restored, and radically new relations between the various units that make up the global system are being shaped and organized. But these periods do not last forever. Gradually the underlying contradiction between the tendencies to unlimited expansion of production and restricted consumption exerts itself. And when it takes over, it assumes the form which it is the merit of Jay Forrester to have described—the capital-goods sectors are discovered to have grown to a size that cannot be sustained and their collapse follows, with dire consequences for the functioning of the entire system.*

Let me now attempt to summarize: The period beginning with the Second World War was extraordinarily favorable to

* In Marxian terms this could be reformulated to say that in periods specially favorable to the expansion of production, Department I (producing means of production) grows at an unsustainably rapid rate relative to the growth of Department II (producing consumption goods). What needs to be understood is that when the favorable conditions change and the expansion of Department I slows down, a self-reinforcing process goes into effect. This is because during the expansion of Department I, a large part of its production is plowed back into Department I itself. An analogy with the steel industry may help here. When the steel industry is growing, a lot of steel is used in the construction of new mills. When the process of expansion stops, this part of the demand for steel simply disappears, and steel-making capacity is suddenly seen to be greater than is required to meet the requirements of the rest of the economy. But exactly the same holds for Department I as a whole since, as in the case of steel, its products are necessary for its own self-expansion. For this reason the collapse of the boom in the capital-goods sector can take place without any prior retardation, let alone cessation, of the growth of the consumption-goods sector (Department II).

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the rapid expansion of production. This period lasted for three full decades—the forties, fifties, and sixties. The crisis set in in 1974 and has been with us since then. The outlook is for a new period of depression reminiscent of the thirties (some prefer to call it stagnation). How long it will last can in no way be predicted. That depends not at all on the kinds of government policies the economists think in terms of, but on whether a new historical conjuncture will take shape favorable to a resumption of the rapid expansion of production and capital accumulation. Obviously, no one can say that this will not happen, but I think one is safe in saying that the nature and outlines of such a new historical conjuncture are not now visible.

As to the implications of the present crisis, I want only to say in closing that in rejecting the fashionable view that changed economic policies will somehow turn things around, I do not mean to imply that upheavals and structural changes, either within the framework of capitalism or going beyond capitalism, are not possible, nor that they may not be vital aspects of a new historical conjuncture which would necessitate a drastic reappraisal of the prospects before us. We must guard against falling into rigidly determinist ways of thinking. But at the very least I believe we can assert with confidence that the crisis of the 1970s marks a crucial historical turning point, and that nothing short of very basic changes will suffice to put us on a new road.

(March 15, 1978)

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CONFRONTATION AND COEXISTENCE

BY ANDREAS PAPANDREOU

The metropolis-periphery polarity is deeply embedded in, and is but a facet of, imperialism. Therefore, in order to understand it fully, it has to be linked with the political and military aspects of imperialism.

The two global powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, have in fact been engaged in war since the death of President Roosevelt in 1945. It has been called the Cold War, but "cold" it actually never was. Armed confrontations directly or indirectly involving the two superpowers have studded the last quarter-century and have taken a spectacular toll of life and property. The only sense in which the Cold War could be called cold is that the recourse to arms has been intentionally localized.

There are two clearly distinguishable periods in the relations between the two giants: the period from Roosevelt's death to August 5, 1963 (the date of the signing of the Moscow treaty on nuclear tests), and the period that follows the signing of this treaty. The first period, which André Fontaine believes may be characterized as the Third World War, was a *period of confrontation*. The second period is called, euphemistically, the *period of peaceful coexistence*. Peaceful coexistence

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Andreas Papandreou is the leader of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) which won 25 percent of the vote in the latest Greek general election.

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includes many years of bitter and costly war in Indochina, as it includes many years of war, or warlike situations, in the Middle East, where the struggle of the Palestinian people against American imperialism and Israeli sub-imperialism continues unabated and at a high cost in human lives.

Peaceful coexistence for the United States and the Soviet Union has meant no more than that the deadly chess game has been played by relatively well-observed rules. They include mutual respect for the other's supremacy within a well-defined sphere of influence; prevention, to the extent possible, of the rise of another superpower; elimination of neutralism; and, finally, mutual restraint in regions where they challenge each other for definition of a new equilibrium.

It is possible to interpret the behavior of the two superpowers during the period of peaceful coexistence in terms of *action* and *response*. But caution is required in extending to the period of confrontation (the first period) an interpretive scheme that seems to fit so well the behavior pattern of the two superpowers in the era of peaceful coexistence. For it would be an error to imagine that in the period of confrontation, action and response were "randomly" distributed. It seems clear to us on the basis of available evidence that in the era of confrontation the *action* was American and the *response* was Russian. To put it bluntly: during the era of confrontation the Soviet Union did not act as an expansionist power—it merely strove to maintain its *hegemony* over a clearly defined region of the world.

But we must go deeper for a fuller understanding of the global scene. For the dominant dynamic on a global scale—*a dynamic that springs directly from the laws of monopoly capitalism* and transcends the relations between the two superpowers —is one of counter-revolution. Its theaters are to be found in the Mediterranean, in Latin America, in Southeast Asia, and in Africa—in the vast expanse of the Third World. The main actor, the main vehicle of this *counter-revolutionary dynamic* is the United States. Not that the Soviet Union identifies itself with the forces of insurgency and national liberation. It deals with governments and forms its alliances with them, independently of their ideological positions or internal social structure.

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Propaganda apart, its attitude toward Third World insurgency and revolution is reserved and may occasionally even be hostile. But the Soviet Union neither identifies itself with counter-insurgency, nor does it take the initiative to suppress revolution —unless it takes place in a nation or region under its own control.

The nationalist and socialist revolutionaries of the peripheral, dependent countries have emerged as the greatest problem of the national security managers of both superpowers. The revolutionaries of the Third World in their struggle to shake off imperialist domination over their countries confront directly the counter-revolutionary forces of the United States. But they represent a threat to the global equilibrium which the Soviet Union has tried to preserve during the era of peaceful coexistence. For the national liberation struggles in the Third World express forces which are by definition contradictory with the present global balance of power. They express the centrifugal, nationalistic quest of the peoples of the Third World in their drive for self-determination.

Wherever U.S. and Western imperialism is successful, it does not impose a colonial structure. Colonialism as we knew it before the Second World War seems to be dead and buried. Neocolonialism, or post-colonialism, takes subtle forms of political and military control and goes hand in hand with economic penetration and domination. Basically, the imperialist powers attempt to infiltrate the state machinery (especially the secret services and the armed forces of the dependent peripheral nations), to develop links with the political and trade union functionaries of their client states, and to form an alliance with the local capitalists who are accorded a status of "junior partnership." In addition, they develop a dependence of the peripheral country on war matériel, they establish military bases that serve their global military and counter-revolutionary strategy, and they form defense alliances and pacts that guarantee the stability of the overall dependency structure.

There are clear signs that the relations between the two superpowers are entering a new third phase. I shall call it the period of *combative coexistence*. For the second period, the peri-

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od of peaceful coexistence, culminated in the Helsinki agreement and, oddly enough, terminated with the rekindling of the Cold War, confrontation style. The signs were clear during the last few months of the Ford-Kissinger administration. They are all too obvious in the early months of the Carter administration. Thus Helsinki has become the tombstone of peaceful coexistence.

What are the signs that this new phase of superpower relations is underway? First, the widespread campaign in the United States based on the claim that the détente has worked against the interests of the United States, which has "lost ground" in the armaments race to the benefit of the Soviet Union. Second, the Carter rhetoric for "self-determination" of nations, a rhetoric that is clearly addressed to the East European Soviet-bloc countries. Third, the Carter rhetoric on "human rights," which strikes directly at the heart of the Soviet regimes. Fourth, the provocative proposals of Cyrus Vance on nuclear-arms control and reduction which could be accepted by the Soviet Union only if it were forced to accept a second place in the global military structure of power.

But the question, of course, is *why?* And the answer has to be found in the dynamics, the laws of motion of contemporary monopoly capitalism or imperialism. In the quarter century that followed the Second World War, the rebuilding and the modernizing of Western Europe offered gigantic opportunities to expanding American capital and is undoubtedly at the root of the spectacular dynamics of capitalism during this period. Surplus extracted from the peripheral societies of the Third World has been transferred by the U.S. multinationals to Europe, to develop its technology, to capture its markets, and to subjugate its governments in the context of NATO. Not surprisingly, this period is characterized in Western Europe by relative peace in the relations between capital and labor. There is talk of a "social contract" in the division of national income, or of an "incomes policy." This is linked both with the relative absence of serious recessions and with the characteristic capability of the capitalist center to engage in the production of worker-oriented mass consumption goods. But a serious crisis is already upon us. Evidence that capitalism had entered a phase of serious

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crisis was already ample before the advent of the "oil crisis." On the surface, it exhibited itself in the world monetary crisis and the breakdown of the Bretton Woods agreement among the capitalist nations of the world. On a deeper level, it displays itself in the increasingly antagonistic relations between the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. The end of the "European frontier" for the United States was inevitable—indeed, it was the price of its success. The European "zone" of global capitalism managed, under the auspices of American-based multinationals, to produce the "discoveries" made in the United States. Thus, the Europeans finally got themselves in a position to challenge the United States in the arena where they developed a "comparative advantage." And this could not fail to have a profound influence on the patterns of international trade, the balance of payments, and indirectly on domestic employment in the United States.

The pyramidal structure that is evolving on a world scale (within the capitalist orbit), and in which America has achieved dominance, cannot but bring about serious structural dislocations which affect the dominant power side-by-side with its satellite partners. The pattern of antagonism and conflict actually extends beyond the relations between the United States and Western European nations to the relations among the members of the European Common Market. Furthermore, the global capitalist crisis is felt in the area of industrial relations and of incomes policy. The end of the "social contract" is around the corner. With it will go the social-democratic position, with its faith in transformation of capitalism through gradual marginal reforms.

The end of the "European frontier" implies the drying up (for the time being in any case) of investment outlets which are both massive in scale and sufficiently profitable. When this happens the expansionist dynamic of capitalism—capital accumulation—is dampened, and the crisis is on. Predictions on the outcome of the resulting antagonisms between the United States and its capitalist allies are difficult. In attempting to guess the pattern of the unfolding scenario of confrontation, we should keep in mind not only the extent of domination of the Western European economy by U.S. industrial and financial

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multinationals—which is spectacular by any standard—but the bargaining advantages that accrue to the United States as a result of its capacity to provide the nuclear umbrella for Western capitalism and its significantly better position in respect to access to oil resources.

No matter what the outcome of this internal conflict may be, Western capitalism will face an impasse unless it can open new "frontiers." The possibilities that may derive from new technologies—including those that may arise from the switch to new forms of energy support of the industrial structure—should not be discounted. And this, in part, may be the long-run meaning of the "energy crisis." But capitalism will inevitably search for extensive investment outlets as well. If it discovers these outlets in Soviet-controlled territory, a major global confrontation is a distinct and awesome possibility. As an alternative, it may turn to the Third World—especially to resource-rich Africa—and be forced to proceed toward a further transformation of the structural characteristics of the metropolis-periphery polarity, by facilitating the industrialization of *some* of the peripheral nations. Were this to happen, the peripheral nations involved would experience development of their industrial base, but *dependency* would be perpetuated, moving on to more advanced and elaborate forms, such as are characteristic of Mexico or Brazil, for instance.

The *combative coexistence* which has been initiated by Carter and his team is a reflection of the internal dynamics of Western capitalism. "Trilateralism"—which relates to the restructuring of the relations among the United States, Western Europe, and Japan on a basis that guarantees U.S. supremacy—is also a Carter policy and goes hand in hand with his new style of brinkmanship.

One aspect of the new phase in U.S.-Soviet relations should not be neglected. It has to do with the efforts of the U.S. administration to develop an anti-Soviet coalition with China, efforts which may also effect the internal struggle for power within the Chinese ruling social layer. This in some respects is the more lethal aspect of U.S. global strategy. But the game is complex and it is hard to make predictions.

In Europe, with the demise of Helsinki, NATO will once

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again try to play a more active and visible role. NATO as the "enforcer" of Pax Americana will attempt to bring a sense of militant unity among the Western partners, who will otherwise be increasingly beset by economic antagonisms and by a tendency to return to protectionist policies.

In the Eastern Mediterranean a complex scenario is evolving. It is dominated by the Arab-Israeli conflict, by the struggle of the Palestinian people against American imperialism and Israeli sub-imperialism; by the fate of Cyprus which was invaded by Turkish troops under American guidance in order to destroy the non-aligned character of the island and to transform it into a U.S. and NATO military base; by Turkish expansionism in the Aegean, which is carefully managed behind the scenes by the United States; by the determination of the Soviet Union to guarantee free passage for its fleet through the Straits; by the increasing difficulties that Yugoslavia is facing—in relation to both superpowers—in maintaining its non-aligned status. Undoubtedly this is a critical area for U.S. and Western imperialism, for it is linked with the oil-rich Middle East. Despite the spectacular growth of the naval presence of the Soviet Union in the area, the United States has struck many successes, mostly by developing temporary "alliances" with some Arab regimes that have "split" the Arab front and set back the Palestinian cause. Indeed, the behavior of the Soviet Union in the area has been so weak as to suggest that there may be some tacit bargaining between it and the United States for the Balkan peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean basin. (And this despite the return of the "cold war.")

But resource-rich Africa is becoming day by day the most coveted target of the United States and the West. But the other two superpowers are also actively present on the continent. It is a region in which no clear rules of behavior have been developed to limit the actions of the superpowers—a sort of "free for all" confrontation with only one restraint present—the fear of major involvements that could easily get out of hand. The national liberation struggles of the peoples of Africa have met heretofore with spectacular success. But great dangers lie ahead. Not so much the danger of military intervention—a danger

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which, of course, is clear and present—but primarily the danger of economic infiltration by Western capital which would lead to a new form of subtle but tenacious dependence.

The economic strategy of some of the oil-rich Arab nations is enhancing this danger. Petrodollars invested in the metropolitan centers of capitalism (this does not refer to Southern Europe) increase the dependence of the investing nations on these centers, for the profitability of these investments may well become an element of their long-term concerns. Similarly, the purchase of war matériel from the West on a grand scale may well act as a conduit of political-military infiltration and dependence.

The problem in Africa and the Middle East is disunity—a disunity which is fomented by the forces of imperialism and superpower conflicts—and dependence on capitalist technology and know-how. These very same problems are faced by the nations of Southern Europe, despite the fact that they find themselves in a somewhat different stage of industrial development.

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RETAIL: A WORKER'S OBSERVATIONS

BY BILL PATRY

Since the publication of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, 1974), we have received a number of letters and comments from workers about what the book meant to them. Recently one correspondent wrote: "I too have just read Harry Braverman's book. It was indeed a powerful experience, and I was left feeling alternately exhilarated and depressed; as a 'semi-skilled' VDJ-typesetter and paste-up 'artist' I'm glad that the story is out, and that Harry Braverman could detail what I'd had a gut feeling about for a long time." Similarly, the following account was inspired by the insights gained by the author into his own work experience from *Labor and Monopoly Capital*.—THE EDITORS

The modern retail outlet bears little resemblance to its predecessors, despite public-relations chatter about "keeping that old-time atmosphere." One's local store may be a unit in a vast nation- or even world-wide chain. Penney's, for example, has over 2,000 stores in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Europe, and in 1976 did $8.3 billion worth of business. In addition to its department stores and catalogue service, Penney's is also a druggist to millions through its Thrift Drug subsidiary, insurer of hundreds of thousands through its insurance companies, and operator of thirty-seven "The Treasury" discount

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stores, as well as a chain of supermarkets. And Penney's is only half the size of Sears Roebuck!

Nor do retail stores limit themselves to the traditional soft or hard lines. Penney's, Sears, Montgomery Ward, and others carry tire, battery, and automotive accessories, with Penney's operating more than 440 auto centers throughout the United States. A Japanese retailer has perhaps taken the ultimate step with the introduction of a mortuary service: sales and service from the cradle to the grave. In addition, retail is now fair (read profitable) game for capitalists heretofore interested solely in traditional capital-intensive industries: Mobil Oil, for example, is now the owner of Marcor, the parent company of Montgomery Ward.

Technology in the service of capitalism is called upon to perform a variety of functions. In the 1970s chain retailers have introduced an impressive arsenal of electronic equipment which, when combined with good old-fashioned surveillance techniques, has created a controlled environment that is almost Orwellian.

The switch to self-service was carried out primarily to economize on labor. Nonetheless it was coordinated with other changes in retail philosophy. In the last quarter-century stores increased rapidly in size. This facilitated the maintenance of large inventories and higher turnover rates (merchandise is on the average turned over four times a year).

At the same time this increase in size created a number of security problems. First, fewer personnel in larger stores meant that vast areas were left "unprotected" and prey to shoplifters. Second, employees—who were now subject to less supervision, received a minimum wage, and were forced to perform repetitious, mindless tasks—started to steal at an unprecedented and still increasing rate.

The use of personal checks and credit cards exploded, necessitating more bookkeeping and resulting in lost profits due to bad checks and overextended and unpaid accounts. The advent of electronic POS (point-of-sale) systems proved to be the solution to almost all of these problems and provided other benefits as well, such as reduced labor costs, reduced training and transaction time (the training period was reduced by

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80 percent, transaction time by 30 to 50 percent), quicker billing, quicker sales information, and a computer-linked system which allows for a complete record of all transactions performed, by whom, when, and where.

A further innovation, developed in conjunction and designed for use with the POS systems, is the Universal Price Code (UPC). This involves an electronically coded color-bar ticket, attached to the merchandise, and "read" either by stationary scanners or by "wands." The benefits of the wand are a further 29 percent reduction in checkout time, almost total elimination of checker errors, complete unit stock control (since all required data, such as department, class, season, style, vendor number, color, size, and price are encoded on the ticket), and labor savings estimated at $7,651 a month in a store doing $140,000 weekly sales.

The retail store in which I once worked had the NCR 280 POS terminal and the 785 Wand Tag Reader. In order to explain how management has used electronics to achieve a remarkable degree of control over what happens on the sales floor, I'll describe a typical transaction, in this case a charge sale, using the store's own charge card. First, the clerk enters a numerical qualification code which specifies the type of transaction to be performed. Next the clerk enters his/her associate's or salesperson's number. In our hypothetical transaction, the clerk would then take the wand (the pencil-like scanner that reads the UPC color-bar ticket) and run it over the ticket, the information contained thereon being automatically fed into the cash terminal (the term "cash register" is as dead as the Edsel), a minicomputer on the store's premises, and the central data bank at the chain's headquarters, which may be hundreds of miles away from the outlet. If only one item is being purchased, the clerk then totals the transaction (if there is more than one item, the scanning is merely repeated). The clerk then takes the customer's charge card and runs the wand over the account number, which is itself on a color-bar ticket affixed to the back of the card.

The number is then run through a memory bank at the central office to determine if the card is active, inactive, stolen, put on exception for male or female only, and valid for the

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amount of purchase (i.e., whether the customer has exceeded his/her credit limit). If all is well, a zero flashes on the display screen, and the terminal automatically completes its cycle. If something is awry, the terminal can automatically cancel the transaction and a phone extension number is flashed. The clerk then dials the number to obtain credit authorization or to learn the correct procedure. In either case, the entire verification procedure is done in a matter of *seconds*.

Employee monitoring devices are also built into the POS system. Since a clerk has to enter his/her associate's or salesperson's number for every transaction, an exhaustive accounting is a possible and indeed an integral part of the system. Every month two different computer printouts are mailed from the central computer bank at the chain's headquarters to certain store administrative personnel. The first printout concerns primarily store, departmental, and individual worker productivity. This printout is sent to the store director and the salesperson's department manager, who use it to monitor worker performance.

The second printout is much more complex. In this case a copy is sent to the store director and to the store security manager. This printout gives a breakdown on the number of each type of transaction performed by every clerk, the percentage of each to the total number of transactions, and (for certain types of transactions) a breakdown by date and terminal number. The printout also includes a listing of those terminals which had overages or shortages, again by date. A more thorough accounting is hard to imagine.

If any clerk is considered to have a disproportionate amount of returns, voids, or exchanges, or is suspected of embezzlement, he/she is marked for observation. In fact, store policy requires that reports and follow-ups be done on all "irregularities." This may involve slipping extra funds into the terminal as a test of honesty. The employee may be spied on by two-way mirrors and security booths, by closed-circuit TV and/or by plainclothes "shoppers."

Employees making purchases must have them bagged at a security station, where they may be checked to ensure that the sales receipt and merchandise match. Sonar alarm tags are

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attached to prevent any unpaid goods from leaving the store. One must sign out for every single pencil, paper clip, rubber band, box of staples, or anything else that isn't bolted down.

Nor does it stop there. In all retail transactions other than cash, paperwork is involved. To avoid any possible loss of corporate profits, a system of double verification is used. When a customer returns an item, even with the receipt, the clerk cannot simply refund the money. The clerk must first write down on the proper form the customer's name, address, and phone number. Before proceeding, he/she must get another clerk's signature in the presence of the customer, who must then sign the document upon completion of the transaction.

This double verification is required for any number of other transactions, such as voids and exchanges. Once a month, an auditor from the chain's headquarters comes and examines every single piece of paperwork involving these and other transactions where error or "irregularities" may be found. The auditor also has access to the second printout and himself creates a third record, involving employee errors, whether of a procedural or technical nature. This may be something as minor as forgetting to circle the expiration date on a charge form. A store executive then brings a copy of the auditor's report to the employee involved, makes him/her sign it, scolds him/her, and puts a copy of the report into the store and employee files.

Retail cultivates a "divide-and-conquer" hierarchy. At the top is the Store Director, followed by the Operations Manager. The next rung is occupied by the Department Managers, followed by the Assistant Department Managers. Finally we have the clerks, who are divided into two categories (red badges and blue badges), depending on whether the employee is empowered to authorize transactions involving checks, exchanges, etc. The Assistant Department Managers wear gold badges with their first names on them; Department Managers have gold badges with their first name and last initial; the Store Director and Operations Manager wear gold badges saying Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so.

In addition to the printouts and audit reports, a clerk can also be "written up." There are two types of write-ups. A

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regular write-up is done when a clerk acts "improperly" to a customer or another clerk. The more serious kind of write-up is the "executive write-up" which is caused by "insubordination," i.e., talking back to a superior or disobeying an order. When an executive write-up occurs, there is a hearing, at which time the employee's side of the story is requested (lest anyone be deceived by a hint of fair play, it should be noted that the report is completed *prior* to the hearing, requiring only the employee's signature of reviewal). If the employee doesn't shape up in thirty days, it's out the door.

Employees are forbidden to talk about wages or politics, and union talk is a ticket to termination. Discipline is maintained by economic necessity. A time clock divided into hundredths of a minute ensures promptness.

Technology affords the retailer a further bottom-line benefit, that of reducing labor costs. As complex jobs are systematized and broken down, the labor costs of production are lowered. While retail workers have never qualified as craft or skilled workers, they nonetheless used to possess certain types of specialized knowledge. When purchasing a suit, for example, a customer expected the clerk to be able to measure, fit, and give tailor-like opinions and estimations. In the modern retail store, by contrast, the idea is to let the merchandise "sell itself." The goods are prominently and conveniently displayed, combined with advertising signs designed to attract the customer's attention. In the ideal sale, the customer walks into the store, attracted by mail or media promotion, spots the prominently placed advertising sign, eyeballs the merchandise below, goes to the rack, selects the desired color and size (in the case of clothing apparel), and carries it up to the checkout counter. There the clerk rings it up on the POS terminal, bags it, and sends the customer on his or her way with little or no human contact other than the banalities of "cash or charge?" With the addition of UPC color-bar ticketing and wand readers, the modern clerk doesn't even need to know the price, much less the positioning of merchandise.

The labor force is therefore cheapened because of the absence of any need to possess specialized knowledge. Clerks

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become thoroughly interchangeable. Any clerk can be placed at any time in men's wear, boys' wear, girls' wear, lingerie, or the sports department with little break-in time required.

And then there's the paycheck. F. W. Woolworth, in a letter to his store managers, once described rather bluntly the relationship between cost and wages: "We must have cheap help or we cannot sell cheap goods." How cheap is cheap? The following table, using data gathered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows the position of retail workers in comparison not only with so-called blue-collar workers, but the clerical and service workers as well.

Occupational group	Median weekly earnings of full-time workers, May 1971
Craftsmen and foremen	$167
Operatives and kindred workers	120
Nonfarm workers	117
Clerical workers	115
Service workers (except private household)	96
Retail	95

SOURCE: Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, 1974), pp. 297, 367. Based on *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1972, p. 33.

Retail exploits primarily and overwhelmingly women, students, and minorities, for the obvious wage-discriminatory reasons. But many retail workers in low-level managerial positions are workers who are skilled in areas where employment opportunities have declined, such as teaching.

Even $95 a week is an exaggeration of the retail clerk's compensation, since full-time jobs are disappearing and part-time work is becoming the norm. Retailers have discovered that labor costs can be reduced by dividing full-time into part-time positions. This saving is reflected not only in lower wages and supplemental costs, such as medical insurance, vacation time, pension payments, etc., but also, and just as important, is the capitalist's ability to adjust the amount of hours used at any given time.

Whereas in capital-intensive industries whole factories may be temporarily laid off, in retail many employees are in a

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state of permanent flux. Like capitalism itself, retail is characterized by recurrent fluctuations. At the mercy of the fickleness of fashion, retailers have little foreknowledge of demand (despite their own attempt to create demand through advertising), and are always attempting to cash in on the latest rage, from leisure suits to pet rocks. As the volume of sales varies from week to week, so too does the amount of working hours required. In the chain I worked for, fully 90 percent of the employees were part-time. In most cases, this included damn nearly everybody, excepting of course the store management. Employees are divided into two categories: short-hour regulars and basic extras. Short-hour regulars are guaranteed a minimum of twenty hours per week, but have a maximum of twenty-four; basic extras have no minimum and a maximum of sixteen hours per week. They are "on call," supposedly always available for sick replacement or special sales. The prevailing attitude toward them is, in the words of one manager, "If they don't come in when they're needed, well there are plenty of people out there who will."

This part-time phenomenon has a number of side effects. Employees never develop a sense of commitment to the chain and in fact usually spend the majority of their considerable leisure time looking for better paying full-time positions. Hence there is not much motivation to organize action of any type. Additionally, because of the insecure nature of their jobs employees are driven into adopting a very compliant attitude toward management, since only management is capable of providing what these workers so desperately need, a full-time job. Illusions about fantastic advancement opportunities are created and workers are duped into believing that if they "produce," perhaps they will be noticed and rewarded with a promotion.

At any rate, employees still have to eat, pay rent, and meet other recurring expenses regardless of production figures, and are, not surprisingly, continually complaining about the lack of hours. This is so common that part of a store director's training involves the playing of encounter games including a scenario in which an angry employee demands more hours.

And finally, there's the public. Though one would like to believe otherwise, it is nonetheless a sad fact of our capitalist

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society that many customers' attitudes toward service workers (and toward each other) are very poor indeed. Furthermore, every retail worker can recall a dozen favorite stories involving the most bizarre behavior imaginable on the part of customers (e.g., beating each other literally to the gound over a 59¢ clearance item).

The retail worker, facing low pay and uncertain hours, performing in an Orwellian environment, is frequently caught between the frying pan of management and the oven of the public. As a fellow clerk once sighed to me, "If they only treated us as well as they do their dogs."

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BOOKS

ELEANOR MARX

By Christine Stansell

Eleanor Marx by Yvonne Kapp. Volume I: *Family Life, 1855-1883.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, hardcover (1972), £5•50. New York: Pantheon Books, hardcover (1972), $10.00; paperback, $4.95. Volume II: *The Crowded Years, 1884-1898.* Lawrence and Wishart, hardcover (1976), £12. Pantheon Books, hardcover (1976), $17.95; paperback, $6.95.

Of the three children of Karl and Jenny Marx, Eleanor Marx was the principal beneficiary of her father's political and intellectual legacy. She was a distinguished socialist writer and speaker, a leader of the Second International, and a gifted labor organizer. Yet she lived most of her adult years in the grip of personal difficulties—many of them peculiarly feminine—which in the end drove her to take her own life. Her story is bound up with the complicated experience of women within the left, and readers

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Christine Stansell, who is finishing a dissertation on women of the laboring poor in antebellum New York City, lives in New York City and works with Action for Women in Chile. She wishes to dedicate this review to the memory of Beatriz Allende, Chilean revolutionary, who died in exile this past October at the age of 33.

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attuned to these historical and political problems will find Yvonne Kapp's two-volume *Eleanor Marx* well worth their attention.

"Family Life" covers Eleanor's first twenty-eight years, from 1855 to her father's death in 1883. She was born in London in circumstances that could hardly have been less auspicious: the family nearly destitute, her mother ill, and the only surviving son on his deathbed. This dark hour was not to be the last in her childhood. The exigencies of failing credit and unpaid rent drove Karl Marx to many an eleventh hour visit to the pawnshop, and Mrs. Marx more than once to her bed in a state of nervous collapse. Yet Eleanor—or Tussy, as she was known to her intimates most of her life—was as genial, gregarious and expansive as a child raised in the best of circumstances. As Kapp remarks, it is a tribute of a kind rarely paid to her father (and, one must add, to her mother) that their youngest, growing up amidst the most sordid financial troubles, saw only a warm and sustaining household around her.

From an early age, Eleanor was absorbed in politics. At five and six, not yet able to write, she advised Lincoln on his conduct of the Civil War in letters dictated to her father. Marx was deeply attached to his small protégée and happily incorporated her into his network of associates. A letter to her grand-uncle, written when she was eight, mixes intimate and revolutionary concerns in a spirit which was to prevail throughout her life in her relations with her family and friends: "My dear Uncle. . . . Are you enjoying yourself? I am, and always do at Christmas time which I think is the jolliest in the year. . . . How do you think the Poles are getting on? I always hold up a finger for the Poles, those brave little fellows." As she grew older, her attention shifted to the Fenians. She was a fierce Irish nationalist throughout her teens, a commitment strengthened by her friendship with the militant Irishwoman Lizzie Burns. "Here, at home . . . the Fenian sway is paramount," Marx wrote bemusedly to his eldest daughter in 1870. "Tussy is one of their head centers." The two older girls were also steeped in politics, but neither shared their sister's single-minded devotion to the struggle. Of the children, it was Eleanor who drew the most sustenance from the Marxes' close-knit socialist circle, and it was she who was most enmeshed in her father's identity. "Tussy *is* me," Marx remarked towards the end of his life.

The first disturbance in this happy life was associated with a failed revolution. During the summer and fall of 1871, hundreds of refugees from the Paris Commune streamed into London. Elea-

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nor and one of the Communards, Lissagaray (he used only his surname), fell in love and became engaged. Her father disapproved of the match. Lissagaray was seventeen years older than Eleanor; moreover, he was at political odds with Marx. He was, however, a hero of the Commune, and to all appearances a kind and loving fiancé. In any case, it was the first conflict of significance between father and daughter, and it caused great pain to both. The rest of the family sided with Marx; Eleanor, in return, made her first bid for independence by leaving home for a few months to teach school.

She remained in this deadlock for ten years, until she was twenty-seven. She would neither break with Lissagaray nor break with her family to marry him, and her father would not change his mind. She continued to search for financial independence and her own work, but her paralysis in the matter of her engagement fostered indecision in these areas as well. She did find new friends among London artists and writers, and her high intellectual capabilities brought her some paid assignments in translating, editing, and research. Eleanor, however, found her occupations to be less than a full life.

In 1882, the engagement drifted to a melancholy though amicable close. Eleanor was dejected and immobilized, not so much by the loss of Lissagaray as by her failure to generate a fully adult life. Unfortunately, the tasks which demanded the most of her in the next year were familial duties falling to the only unmarried daughter. She had nursed her dying mother a year earlier; now she bore the burden of caring for her father in his last illness, and took on many of the responsibilities for her motherless nieces and nephews when her sister Jenny died the same year. "It drives me half mad to sit here when perhaps my *last* chance of doing something is going," she wrote of her hours in the sick-room. "Much and hard as I have tried I could not crush out my desire to *try something*. The chance of independence is very sweet. . . . You see I'm not clever enough to live a purely *intellectual* life nor am I dull enough to be content . . . to do nothing." The alternatives which she posed may appear needlessly stark, but English society in 1882 did not offer many intermediate options to a single woman. To use the term of her contemporary George Gissing, she was an "odd woman." She did "try something": acting lessons, which she passionately hoped would lead to a career on the stage. After a year, however, her teacher reluctantly told her "she would never achieve real greatness."

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Her father died in 1883. Socialism in London was at a low ebb. Eleanor, at twenty-eight, was a woman at loose ends. It was at this impasse that she met Edward Aveling, the man who would dominate the rest of her life. He would also bear responsibility, if only in part, for her untimely death. Aveling was a physiologist, secularist lecturer, would-be dramatist, and a recent convert to socialism. Unhappily married, he had been separated from his wife for some time. Within a few months of their introduction, he and Eleanor set up housekeeping in a "free union."

Her liaison with Aveling propelled Eleanor back into activity. The period of her great achievements, "The Crowded Years" of Kapp's second volume, coincided not only with the revival of British socialism but with the years she lived with Aveling. From 1884 to her death in 1898, she was a central figure in the internationalist, non-revisionist faction of the British left. With a few others, including Aveling, she led this small but influential group of militants through the insular intrigues of the generally middle-class Social Democratic Federation to an alliance with the most downtrodden of British workers in the New Unionism and Eight Hour Day movements. From 1889, when she began organizing women workers during the great London Dock Strike, Eleanor involved herself daily in the trials and aspirations of the laboring poor. By 1890, the woman who eight years earlier had feared "my *last* chance of doing something is going" sat on the Executive Council of the National Union of Gasworkers and General Laborers, leading organization of the unskilled, as one of the best known and loved socialists of her day. "Tussy is on the Council . . . as a delegate from her Silvertown women workers," Engels wrote proudly to a friend on the continent, "and is so popular . . . that she is simply called 'our mother.' "

Aveling himself was a man of questionable character: second-rate in all of his vocations, vain and cold, a womanizer and an egotist. Moreover, he had a habit of incurring debts which he never repaid, as well as a penchant for financial philandering of an even shadier character. Within the movement, "slurs and slanders followed Aveling as slime to a slug," Kapp writes of one of several episodes in which he was accused of misusing organizational funds. Eleanor's friends, with the important exception of Engels, disliked him from the start. Bernard Shaw and William Morris's daughter May each compared him to a lizard; Olive Schreiner thought he looked like an illicit diamond merchant. Eleanor was painfully conscious of what could be most charitably

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termed his shortcomings. Only a year after she had moved in with him, she confessed to Olive Schreiner, "I always feel equally astounded at his absolute incapacity to feel anything—unless he is personally incommoded by it—for 24 consecutive hours. . . . While I feel utterly desperate he is perfectly unconcerned! . . . Write me a line . . . it will help me get through the long miserable days, and longer, more miserable nights, with less heavy a heart." Aveling never was to become more feeling, nor Eleanor less so; the changes that did come to their relationship were almost always for the worse. Yet for fifteen years, Eleanor, by some sadly tangled logic, made her loyalty to the man a matter of principle. In the words of a Fabian contemporary, "Eleanor Marx was a splendid woman, strong both in brain and in heart and true as steel to the man who was greatly her inferior in both."

The death of her beloved Engels in 1895 left an already depressed Eleanor stricken and desolate. She had yet to recover when, in the summer of 1897, she discovered that Aveling had secretly married another woman. Tortured quarrels and ineffectual reconciliations followed. Meanwhile, Aveling fell critically ill. Eleanor nursed him for months, depleting her own reserves of strength and purpose and driving herself to the point of despair. "I am so alone," she wrote her half-brother Freddy Demuth, the only person to whom she confided these last wrenching turns of the relationship. Yet despite her suffering, she insisted on remaining with Aveling. In refusing Freddy's entreaties to leave, she articulated her view of her responsibility in the situation: "In some a certain *moral sense* is wanting . . . just as some are . . . otherwise unhealthy. We must try and cure, and, if no cure is possible, do our best. I have learnt this through long suffering—suffering in ways I would not even tell you." But she could not bear her self-imposed martyrdom indefinitely. Early the next spring, she killed herself. She was forty-three.

In the prime of her life, a gifted revolutionary exhausted her great powers in the uniquely feminine enterprise of trying to save a man from himself. Will Thorne, leader of the Gasworkers, said years later that had she lived, she "would have been a greater women's leader than the greatest of contemporary women." Through her work in the union and her involvement with women in London's East End, Eleanor had come to believe that socialists must first address the double exploitation of women—within their families and at their workplaces—in any successful program of radical change. If in her practice and her theory she glimpsed both

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the severity of women's oppression and the centrality of their liberation, it is all the more tragic that in her personal life she bound herself to the Victorian cross of long-suffering womanhood.

Yvonne Kapp chooses to ignore this paradox and, indeed, comes close to repudiating any feminist analysis of Eleanor's life. In Kapp's opinion, her subject was an exceptional woman who rose above the conventional troubles of her sex: "She treated men as equals . . . and as an equal she was treated. . . . [She was] objectively alive to the social injustices that shackled women's freedom, subjectively free." In light of the suicide, as well as Eleanor's chronic inability to assert her own needs against those of her family or lover, Kapp's judgment seems far too sanguine, as does her assessment of the Marx-Aveling liaison. "Eleanor's union with Aveling may have been, was, disastrous in the long run," she writes. "His character may have been, was, deplorable. Nonetheless, from the time her life was joined with his, it became purposeful." Here, as at many points where she confronts the contradictions of Eleanor's temperament, Kapp stops short. By what unhappy dialectic, we might ask, could Eleanor only find her bearings by situating herself within a barren love affair?

Throughout the study, Kapp tries to counter those interpretations of Eleanor's story that have arisen from anti-Marxist biases. As she notes of this genre: "The facts widely known about Eleanor Marx are that she lived with a man of evil reputation who married someone else and that she killed herself. Of this the stuff of theatre is made: a neurotic woman, a villain, an unhallowed union, betrayal, suicide. . . . The sub-plot concerns the awful fate and actuarial risks attendant upon being one of Karl Marx's daughters." In contrast, Kapp stresses the positive elements: Eleanor's happy childhood, her strong ties to her family and friends, and her political accomplishments. Her approach is a corrective, but it leads to a failure to confront Eleanor's crippling difficulties in making a satisfying life for herself. To be *any* father's daughter in Victorian England posed risks to a woman's autonomy and confidence. Eleanor was the protégée of one of the century's most formidable masculine authorities. Surely such a relationship must have bequeathed to her enduring perplexities; but Kapp, with a certain doctrinaire defensiveness, will not allow the fact of Eleanor's patrimony to account for any of her problems.

In the second volume, she minutely chronicles Eleanor's political activity, but skirts any sustained analysis of the self-destructive impulses she was courting at the same time. Kapp transcends the

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sexist biases which lead biographers of women to maximize their private at the expense of their public accomplishments, and thereby grants her subject a respect generally reserved for men. Kapp's tribute to Eleanor Marx's inspiring political achievements is welcome, but she neglects the overriding task of analyzing the conditions which exacted from her so terrible a price.

Despite its inadequacies, however, *Eleanor Marx* stands as a biography of the first order. Kapp has recreated a complex woman: revered by others but deprecatory of herself, courageous in public but shrinking in private, passionately single-minded but deeply conflicted. Most important, she has resurrected from obscurity the activist who remained, in her mother's words, "a politician from top to bottom." Although Eleanor's sensibility within her personal life grew increasingly tortured, her revolutionary purpose remained unfaltering to the end, her political instincts wonderfully true.

The biography offers a few gratifying glimpses of the socialist and feminist partisan in her everyday political encounters. Mrs. Marx-Aveling pens a sharp reminder to the editor of a labor paper that the word "man," in any communiqué from the Gasworkers, should be taken to mean "man and woman." In the midst of an angry crowd of Fenians, Eleanor lashes out against an Irish policeman who has collared a demonstrator: "Aren't there enough Englishmen to do such dirty work that an Irishman must help?" In Hyde Park on May Day, 1891, Eleanor speaks to an enormous demonstration on the importance of making the women's unions as strong as the men's. She is greeted by cheers and shouts of "good old stoker!" from the Gasworkers in the crowd of half a million.

The first premise of Eleanor Marx's character, apparent to any whose lives she touched, was a commitment to socialist revolution. Her search for a personal life sufficient to support that commitment was more troubled. In this she was not alone: women on the left have often found it difficult to reconcile their identities as revolutionaries with the requirements of their families, lovers, and children.

If Eleanor had lived to only sixty-three years, she would have witnessed the Russian Revolution, a victory that surely would have brought joy to her spirit and confirmation to her life's work. We cannot know in what ways she could have pushed the movement ahead in her maturing years of leadership, but we can be sure, especially those of us who are socialist-feminists, that we lost by her

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death. Even from our own historical vantage point, the waste of her life is bitter, and can be redeemed only in the long struggle to make a viable place in the world for other daughters of Marx.

Women are the creatures of an organized tyranny of men, as the workers are the creatures of an organized tyranny of idlers. Even where this much is grasped, we must never be weary of insisting on the non-understanding that for women, as for the laboring classes, no solution of the difficulties and problems that present themselves is really possible in the present condition of society. All that is done, heralded with no matter what flourish of trumpets, is palliative, not remedial. Both the oppressed classes, women and the immediate producers, must understand that their emancipation will come from themselves. Women will find allies in the better sort of men, as the laborers are finding allies among the philosophers, artists, and poets. But the one has nothing to hope from man as a whole, and the other has nothing to hope from the middle class as a whole. . . .

Society is morally bankrupt, and in nothing does this gruesome moral bankruptcy come out with a more hideous distinctness than in the relation between men and women. Efforts to postpone the crash by drawing bills upon the imagination are useless. The facts have to be faced.

—*The Woman Question*, by Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling

When we put together three things; first, the natural attraction between opposite sexes; secondly, the wife's entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will; and lastly, that the principal object of human pursuit, consideration, and all objects of social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him—it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character. And this great means of influence over the minds of women having been acquired, an instinct of selfishness made men avail themselves of it to the utmost as a means of holding women in subjection, by representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man, as an essential part of sexual attractiveness. Can it be doubted that any of the other yokes which mankind have succeeded in breaking, would have subsisted till now if the same means had existed, and had been as sedulously used, to bow down their minds to it?

—John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, (1869)

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DAUGHTERS OF EARTH

By Naomi Katz and Nancy Milton

Daughter of Earth by Agnes Smedley. Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1973. 420 pp., $8; paperback $4.

Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution by Agnes Smedley. Jan MacKinnon and Steve MacKinnon, eds. Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1976. 208 pp., paperback $4.

That Agnes Smedley, a writer of such broad political dimensions and significance should have remained so long in obscurity is indeed incredible. It is a sign of the times that she should finally have been rescued from oblivion by the Feminist Press. The 1973 publication of her autobiographical novel, *Daughter of Earth,* and now the *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution* (ably collected and edited by Jan and Steve MacKinnon), are thus important contributions to the political consciousness of the present period, and part of the slow awakening to the realization that there was also political consciousness in the recent American past. The seventies in America seem far more attuned to a feminist message than to a class one, but it is one of the positive aspects of the present movement that the search for historical enlightenment on one issue turns up buried treasures that pertain to others.

Naomi Katz teaches anthropology at San Francisco State University, and has written in the areas of women's studies and the political economy of noncapitalist social formations. Nancy Milton is the co-author of *The Wind Will Not Subside,* and co-editor of *People's China.* Katz and Milton are co-editors of *Fragment From A Lost Diary,* an anthology of short stories by and about women in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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For all the importance of feminism to her own life, politically and personally, and to her writing, Smedley's main distinction was as a revolutionary writer. The stories and sketches in *Portraits of Chinese Women,* for example, have been intelligently ferreted out and organized by the editors; but, as they suggest in their excellent introduction, it is unlikely that Smedley herself would have put all her writings on Chinese women into a single volume, for she saw their struggles as an inseparable part of the Chinese Revolution. In her passion for social justice, she felt herself a partisan of the oppressed, not always separating out class, sexual, and national oppression. Neither *Daughter of Earth* nor *Portraits of Chinese Women* can be described simply as working-class, socialist, or feminist, but they have powerful aspects of all.

Daughter of Earth is essentially an autobiographical novel, chronicling the first thirty years of Agnes Smedley's life, before she went to China. The poverty-ridden frontier life of her childhood is overwhelmingly harsh; as Smedley watches those around her becoming crushed by hardship and defeat, she documents the development of the woman she would become. She watches the father she remembers from early childhood as a father like no one else's—dashing, imaginative, adventurous—become alcoholic and violent. And as he escapes periodically from the family which he sees as binding him to the cruelties of itinerant labor, Smedley's mother, who had asked no more than the possibility of raising her family as a hard-working farm wife, is broken by the struggle to keep herself and the children alive, by malnutrition and ill health. She is, in Smedley's memories, the mother who weeps and works endlessly, who whips this daughter repeatedly for reasons that the child never knows.

Smedley's class hatred was unequivocal and emerges very starkly and powerfully from her work when it is read in 1977. She never had any doubts as to what class oppression meant, the human destruction that it wrought, nor the need for its abolition. Her mother's life was representative of the life that a poor woman must live, and the total oppression by both men and society was bound up inescapably in the cycle of sex, childbirth, and child rearing. The other choice she could perceive, a way for a woman to live with more control, was also determined by sexual and economic oppression. The young Agnes (Marie Rogers in *Daughter of Earth*) watched her mother's sister Helen grow up—the beautiful, self-confident girl who always understood that independence meant earning your own money—first becoming a proud laundry

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worker and then a prostitute whose earnings over the years kept her sister's children from starvation. With these women representing to her the only apparent possibilities for her own adulthood, it is little wonder that Smedley's feminism and class consciousness took the form that they finally did.

The only way Smedley found individually to escape the female Janus fate of her mother/aunt was to reject anything that might be associated with the role or vision of women. It seems that sexuality was horrifying to her, and in particular the terror of pregnancy, which after two abortions was certainly the cause of the breakup of her young and rather egalitarian marriage. Much commentary on *Daughter of Earth* has read into her story a series of oppressive relationships with men, but she herself is much fairer. She wrote to her husband: "I take the blame, and I *am* to blame. I do not want to be married; marriage is too terrible and I should never have entered it. I was wrong—for you loved me and I do not know what love means." She seemed to fear intimate personal relationships with women as well as men, with brothers as well as lovers, terrified that she would inevitably be pulled into the traditional traps that love creates for women. "When one loves, one can easily be enslaved; and I would not be enslaved. Freedom is higher than love. At least today. Perhaps one day the two will be one."

Smedley herself points to a streak of ruthlessness in her personal escape from the life of the working-class woman. Child as well of the American frontier, her fierce independence and individualism no doubt contributed to her frequent unease with collectives consisting of either socialists or nationalists. Her greatness lay in the fact that her infinite capacity for passion and loyalty was always at the service of the oppressed. Whether they were prisoners, Indian revolutionaries, workers fighting the bosses, or women held down by their husbands, she felt for them and fought for them.

Given her strengths and disabilities, it was a bit of the greatest historical good fortune and perhaps even logic that Agnes Smedley found herself in the China of the early thirties; for there, in that most profound of social revolutions, everything that she had ever understood came together—the clear and pure struggle of a hideously oppressed class, the rising of women who had been enslaved in a way that her mother and aunt had never known, a revolutionary answer in action. In her lifetime struggles, political and personal, she had always either found herself or put herself "outside"—family, class, socialist intellectuals, Indian nationalists—

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but in China her outside status was simply a given. To the Chinese, her position was established as "American friend of the Chinese people and the Chinese Revolution," and in that role she was able to give full scope to her fierce convictions and remarkable abilities. She never deceived herself that she could fully share in the Chinese experience. In the excerpt "Mining Families" (originally from *China Fights Back*), Smedley expresses both strong feelings of international solidarity and awareness of her special position which gave her China writings their particular combination of assurance and humility. "It is difficult to realize, except for the language, that I was talking to Chinese miners, and their wives, sisters and daughters. Some way or other, the miners of all countries look alike, move alike, have the same kind of hands into which coal dust is beaten or rubbed. . . . Their problems are almost the same, though the problems of the Chinese miners are greater and more difficult than those of Americans." But later—"I left the miners feeling once more that I am nothing but a writer, a mere onlooker. I look at their big, black-veined hands, at their cloth shoes worn down to their socks or bare feet, at their soiled shirts. I know there is no chance for me ever to know them and share their lives. I remain a teller of tales, a writer of things through which I have not lived." But she had lived through enough to be one of the truest Western recorders of the vast human drama of the Chinese Revolution.

Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution is very accurately titled, for these are indeed portraits drawn from a number of sources—Smedley's diaries, journalistic accounts, excerpts from her books. Smedley's women, with their varied class backgrounds, are particularly sympathetic and interesting because of their response to the revolutionary demands of their time. For example, Chang Siao-hung in "The Dedicated" breaks from her wealthy Hong-kong family not for her personal liberation as a doctor, but to put her skill and her life at the service of the Revolution. She, the upper-class woman who becomes a Communist, is sharply contrasted with the women in "The Living Dead" who haven't the strength or goodness to maintain their early revolutionary tendencies, and they disintegrate respectively into opium addiction, madness, and treachery.

Smedley is not a short-story writer but a journalist, and readers looking for emphasis on the internal lives of the women in *Portraits* will be disappointed. These are somewhat flat but powerful sketches on a grand canvas; Smedley's interest is less in what

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these women feel than in what made them what they are and what they then do with the strengths and possibilities they have. One feels that what she had observed and understood throughout her life, that the true freedom of women requires as a first condition their economic independence, found its most total expression in the selection excerpted from *Battle Hymn of China* entitled "Silk Workers." The selection opens with a description of the violence and corruption of the military Kwangtung Province government of 1930 and continues with the greed of the officials and merchants of the Canton Silk Guild with whom she travels to the regions where millions of peasants toil to produce their product. They spoke with hatred and contempt of the thousands of young women spinners, women notorious throughout China as lesbians. If their families forced them to marry, "they merely bribed their husbands with a part of their wages and induced them to take concubines. The most such a married girl would do was bear one son; then she would return to the factory, refusing to live with her husband any longer." Until 1927, there had been Communist cells and trade unions among them; now they had formed secret "Sister Societies," and they struck for higher wages and shorter hours. When Smedley sees the handsome young black-clad women, dignified, free, and with the audacity to laugh openly at her official escort, she reminds us that "these were the only places in the whole country where the birth of a baby girl was an occasion for joy, for here girls were the main support of their families."

One evening, when Smedley is left alone by her irritated Silk Guild escort, she is taken by several of the silk workers to the home of one of them. Her description of her visit there, surrounded by parents, little brothers, neighbors, and filature girls, is one of the most moving sections of the book. In the pictures and gestures with which they communicate are illustrated the arrogant boss brought to tears by a row of girls holding hands around the mill, the strike, the ten-hour day. And finally they sing, first they and then she, understanding nothing of the words of each other's songs, but profoundly joined together. To Agnes Smedley, these joyous and militant silk workers were the possibilities of feminism, of revolution, of working-class strength and solidarity. She ends, "I lay thinking of ancient things . . . of the common humanity, the goodness and unity of the common people of all lands." She had found in a living moment the totality of her own life.

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE CURRENT REPRESSION IN WEST GERMANY

Since little is known in the United States about the general situation, and in particular about the current massive wave of repression, here in West Germany we, a group of U.S. students at a West German university, would like to describe to members of the American left a few aspects of this growing danger. As during the McCarthy era in the United States, the ruling class in West Germany has unleashed a wave of persecution against those (relatively few) West Germans who have taken a stand for social change and critical judgment. Under the pretext of removing "extremists," also branded "enemies of the Constitution," from all positions of public influence, socialists, communists, and other democrats (including many Social Democrats and liberals) face the risk of losing their jobs for their political convictions. We have personally witnessed the resulting climate of fear, intimidation, and self-censorship at West German universities.

The current wave of repression has considerably affected West German trade unions, which, according to their official policy, routinely expel activist members. Mass-media coverage has become noticeably less critical, not to mention the cases of voluntary withdrawal of politically "questionable" books by major publishers for fear of possible lawsuits. However, the main brunt is borne by civil servants, who comprise 20 percent of the West German working force. In the wake of a 1972 federal policy decision concerning "radicals" in the civil service, which Willy Brandt, the chancellor then responsible, has publicly admitted to have been a mistake, over 800,000 applicants for civil service jobs, including all prospective teachers, have been investigated by so-called Offices for

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the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutzämter*), which have managed to gather 2.5 million dossiers on West German citizens. There have been over 10,000 hours of hearings on applicants concerning their allegiance to the Constitution. Over 2,000 applicants have been denied positions, which means that, in light of the state's monopoly in many professions, they are robbed for the rest of their lives of the opportunity to exercise the professions for which they were trained. (These statistics are taken from a broadcast of the state-owned West German television on February 14, 1977.) These cases are known as *Berufsverbote* (which can roughly be translated as "blacklisting"), a term which, due to its ominous significance in present-day West Germany, has entered untranslated into most European languages. They represent only the tip of an iceberg of politically motivated delays in appointments, fears of arousing suspicion by making use of one's constitutionally guaranteed civil rights (e.g., by signing a petition, by participating in a demonstration, or by joining a pacifist organization, actions which have been cited in justifying *Berufsverbote*), and anxieties about one's future.

To give you a few concrete examples of *Berufsverbote,* we have chosen four well-known cases. First, a locomotive engineer with an excellent service record was dismissed on the sole ground that he was a member of the reformist West German Communist Party (DKP), which, incidentally, has consistently pledged its loyalty to the West German Constitution and categorically rejects violence as a means of change. Second, in March 1975, the internationally renowned West Berlin Professor of Political Science Wolf-Dieter Narr, a long standing member of Willy Brandt's Social Democratic Party (SPD) and an outspoken critic of all measures restricting civil rights in West Germany, was denied a position at the Law School of the University of Hanover for explicitly political reasons: among other things, he was expressly criticized for having signed a leaflet calling for a demonstration against the war in Vietnam and for having ties to the West German movement against nuclear proliferation. A third example is that of the teacher Sylvia Gingold, the daughter of a well known anti-fascist who in 1975 was distinguished with an Order of Merit of the French Republic for his active participation in the French Resistance. The Gingold family emigrated to France in 1933, being persecuted by the Nazis as Jews and on political grounds. For years after their return to West Germany, they had to fight for their German citizenship since they had been active Communists. Sylvia Gingold, after successfully

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teaching for four years, was dismissed in 1975—on the sole grounds that she was a member of the CP. After a massive publicity campaign, she was reinstated last year, one of the few exceptions to the rule, no doubt because the case was embarrassing to the West German government, ever conscious of its historically tainted image abroad. A fourth example is the University of Munich, where students with part-time jobs in libraries and research projects are now, in keeping with a directive of the Bavarian government of last summer, investigated as to their allegiance to the Constitution. Of the 800 to 1,200 students estimated to have been investigated to date, many have been plunged into financial difficulties through suspension of their salaries due to the as yet unconcluded investigations and the consequent remaining doubts as to their allegiance to the Constitution on the part of the officials. The university president speaks of a resulting "thorough psychosis" at the university.

Similar cases, combined with memories of the recent German past and concern about the considerable influence of West German capitalism on Western Europe, have motivated citizens of the countries bordering West Germany to found committees for the defense of civil rights there. Among them, the committees in France (headed by François Mitterand) and Scandinavia are particularly well known. We urge you to gather more information about West German repression and to attempt to spread it among members of the U.S. left and, if possible, to the mass media in the United States. This could help support the initiative for a Bertrand Russell Tribunal on repression in West Germany, which has been put forward by various progressive West German political organizations.

In socialist struggle,
(Names withheld by request)

Ernest Feder

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ON "THE FETISHISM OF INDUSTRIALIZATION"

I

ON THE NEED FOR POLITICS

By Michael Gruber and Alan Mandell

In "The Fetishism of Industrialization" (MONTHLY REVIEW, October 1976), Vicente Navarro attempts to offer a corrective to theories of contemporary Western societies which seek to locate the origins of domination and exploitation in the process of industrialization itself. For Navarro, this emphasis upon the invasion of industrialization into all aspects of our lives deflects us from an understanding of the true basis of "manipulation of addiction and consumption" (p. 37): the capitalist mode of production and consumption.

The work of Ivan Illich, particularly his analysis of contemporary health care, *Medical Nemesis,* serves Navarro as an example of this theoretical model of industrialization that confuses the cause of this societal "dependency" with its symptoms. By mistakenly focusing his critique on the "manipulation by the bureaucracies created as a result of industrialization" (p. 36), Illich systematically misses the source of medical "iatrogenesis" (damage done by a medicalized society). Such an analysis can only result,

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according to Navarro, in an overemphasis upon individual consumption and its necessary social correlate—the politics of life-style.

Yet, by reformulating his position in this manner, Navarro denies Illich his true insight into the significance of the "industrialization of man": that regardless of who owns and controls the productive apparatus, the reliance upon the infinite production of industrial goods and social technologies negates any intention of improving the quality of life within society. Illich's analysis probes the problematics of any social constellation locked into the vicious equation of industrial expansion and human happiness. Illich *never* denies the significance of production in shaping the social and economic realities of a society. What he does try to reveal is that a narrow preoccupation with the problem of the ownership and control of production can never address itself to the processes of alteration in human needs and values that must define any truly radical transformation of society.

It is this same inability to confront questions of the origin of individual and social needs that defines Illich's critique of consumerism. For, like those who fetishize production, consumerists ultimately avoid moving beyond the reign of quantity:

> Unless it disabuses the client of his urge to demand and take more services, consumer protection only reinforces the collusion between giver and taker, and can play only a tactical and a transitory role in any political movement aimed at the health-oriented limitation of medicine. (*Medical Nemesis*, p. 236)

All of Illich's works can be understood as guides to a new politics necessarily responsive to the quality of individual and social experience that neither "productionism" nor "consumerism" recognizes.

From Navarro's productionistic orientation, which defines politics as epiphenomenal to the question of the ownership and control of the means of production, Illich's sense of politics denies "true" politics by "celebrating" cultural life-styles. But, by failing to recognize that politics is the arena wherein the experiences of social, cultural, and economic life come to have meaning, Navarro relegates the significance of politics in social change to a by-product of economics itself. Navarro's definition of politics forces him to portray Illich as an industrialist-in-despair, overlooking Illich's concern with the necessity of people to experience politics as a process of coming to understand and change their daily lives:

> The perception of nemesis leads to a choice. Either the natural boundaries of human endeavor are estimated, recognized, and

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translated into politically determined limits, or compulsory survival in a planned and engineered hell is accepted as the alternative to extinction. (*Medical Nemesis,* p. 271)

This description is not the "rebellion" of a "desperate" man. It is rather the beginnings of an effort to take seriously the urgent need for a democratic politics. Illich's respect for and attention to the quality of individual and social experience does not result in a sanctification of these experiences, as Navarro would contend. Cultural life-styles do not replace politics—but politics cannot deny its purpose in fully and publicly reflecting upon their meaning in a larger socio-economic and cultural nexus. Navarro's analysis, however, subordinates the experience of a political totality oriented to discussion of and practical agreement upon basic values and just rules, to the laws of production. In this way, Navarro's analysis does not differ from the pervasive view that explains the problem of the political as solvable by engineered governability: people become things to manipulate and politics become technocratic.

Illich, however, assists us in the experience of understanding the distinction between governability and democratic politics. By insisting that "only a widespread agreement on the procedures through which the autonomy of post-industrial man can be equitably guaranteed will lead to the recognition of the necessary limits to human action" (*Medical Nemesis,* p. 267), Illich not only defetishizes industrialization, but also demystifies a model of revolution that eliminates the necessity for politics.

Michael Gruber
Alan Mandell

New York City
November 1976

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II

ILLICH'S CRITIQUE OF MEDICINE

By Iring Fetscher

Vicente Navarro is doubtless right in maintaining that Illich's analysis does not penetrate to the socio-economic structures, including those which determine the behavior of physicians. Nevertheless, it seems to me mistaken to conclude that this insight refutes Illich's critique. Toward the end of his article Navarro says: "And thus, contrary to what Illich and others postulate, I believe that the greatest potential for improving the health of our citizens is not primarily through changes in the behavior of individuals, but mainly through changes in the patterns of control, structures, and behavior of our economic and political system." In this sentence he himself has softened the rigid contrast between "change of socio-economic structure" and "change of individual behavior." Even if the "change of individual behavior" is not sufficient to change the structures, still the structures can hardly be changed unless the attitudes and behavior patterns which they inculcate are changed, at least by a pioneering minority. The intellectual insight into the fact that these patterns are inculcated by structures is not enough to mobilize the will to change these structures. It seems to me therefore wrong to assert that a strategy which starts from life-style is "far from representing a threat to the power structure." This would be the case only if efforts along these lines were isolated in an escapist fashion from the rest of society. There is of course always a tendency in this direction, but it seems to me that it is not at all an absolute necessity.

If Navarro is right that the creation of artificial needs and the existence of a passive mass of consumers, as well as the production and reproduction of a consumption-oriented ideology, are characteristics of (late) capitalism, then surely arguments like those of Illich must be welcomed as at least a worthwhile contribution to combating the dominance of this kind of consumer behavior.

Iring Fetscher has taught philosophy and political science at Harvard, the New School for Social Research, and Frankfurt. He is the author of *Karl Marx and Marxism*, and *Rousseau's Political Philosophy*.

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To be sure, concentration of the attack against the medical profession is mistaken. It did not create the socio-economic system or consumer behavior and represents what is for the individual merely a particularly sensitive and painful aspect of the system. However for purposes of both attack and clarification, good use can be made of the insight that the way the medical profession (including drugs and hospitals) has been integrated into the late-capitalist economy has had a deforming effect on both the process of diagnosis and methods of treatment, and has transformed the sacrosanct physician-patient relationship into a relationship between commodity seller and commodity buyer. How deeply this commodity relationship has been internalized can be seen from the protest of American dentists against caries-inhibiting additions to drinking water. Caries are seen as the collective property of the dental profession, and any encroachment of the state on this "property" is rejected.

The "self-help" aspect of Illich's protest may be exaggerated and can easily become romantic, but behind it lies the legitimate demand of the patient to be fully informed and to be treated like a responsible adult and not merely like an object. To the extent that late-capitalist society inflicts on the citizens of the highly industrialized metropoles not so much direct physical deprivation as alienation, passivity, and neuroticism—to this extent the critical analysis of everyday life takes on more and more significance, and the task of a future socialism becomes ever more concrete, implying the necessity of a transformation of everyday life (modes of consumption, attitudes, relations among individuals in their day-to-day contacts). It seems to me that the critique of Ivan Illich tends to obscure this aspect. Health care in a socialist society must differ "inherently" from that of the Western metropoles—not only through offering free care with the same drugs and methods of treatment. What is required is not only better and more systematic cures but also a changed relation of individuals to their bodies and a de-hierarchized doctor-patient relationship. Solidarity of individuals in a classless society needs preparation and conscious cultivation; it certainly will not come about automatically.

Illich's critique of medicine (as in the case of education) is one-sided and not radical enough (because it neglects the socio-economic roots), but it represents a valuable enrichment of the explanatory-critical potential which ought to be utilized and not merely pushed aside.

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III

CORPORATE VALUES AND PROFESSIONAL WORK

By Warwick Armstrong

Vicente Navarro's article, "The Fetishism of Industrialization," in the October 1976 issue of MONTHLY REVIEW is welcome. It comes as a timely corrective to the argument that underdevelopment and social problems stem essentially from the process of industrialization, from large-scale technology, from individual inadequacies, or from any one of a number of other causes—except that related to the functioning of the social system we call capitalism. And the capacity of that self-same system to incorporate the Illich-type technology, ecology, or life-style argument within its folklore of constant change and adaptation seems equally evident.

The two aspects of the article I want to comment on, however, are a little to the side of Navarro's main theme. The first relates to his references to the alienation of people from their work through their separation from the means of production; the second concerns the role of bureaucracies as "administrators of the system" in promoting and justifying that separation.

It is especially relevant here to remind ourselves of the observations of Maurice Dobb (and at the same time to pay respect to that outstanding economist and historian, whose death was reported in the October 1976 issue of MONTHLY REVIEW) on the impact of capitalist industrial organization, and its implications for human beings subjected to it. In his *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* he speaks of the introduction of team-processes and the ever-increasing division of labor in the eighteenth-century factory, and the impact on those who had before been skilled craftspeople in their own right. Now, concentrated under one roof in a restricting and specialized production activity, they found that they were no longer masters of their own time and pace of work. Instead, they became increasingly subjected to the need "for the activities of the human producer to conform to the rhythm and the movements of the machine-process: a technical

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shift of balance which had its socio-economic reflection in the growing dependence of labor on capital and in the growing role played by the capitalist as a coercive and disciplinary force over the human producer in his detailed operations." Dobb continues:

> Andrew Ure in his *Philosophy of Manufactures* triumphantly announced as the "grand object" of the new machinery that it led to "the equalization of labor," dispensing with the special aptitudes of the "self-willed and intractable" skilled workman, and reducing the task of work-people "to the exercise of vigilance and dexterity—faculties, when concentrated on one process, speedily brought to perfection in the young." (p. 259)

Dobb's argument is not that exploitation and oppression did not exist previous to the industrial revolution, under conditions of petty production. The point is that, despite exploitation, the skilled master or journeyman had been able to exercise individual choice to a considerable degree in the time, methods, and tools used in his task. He had been required to call on his skill, strength, and intelligence to fulfill an act of production for which he was normally responsible from start to finish. He exercised his judgment wholly, and largely controlled his means of production. The system of machine production in capitalist factories changed all this. Exploitation, which had earlier come from the merchant in the selling of the craftsman's product, now deepened to incorporate the entire production process. The once-skilled producer became de-skilled. He was forced into a system where the division of labor demeaned and diminished his human capacities. And it converted his labor power into a completely replaceable (replaceable especially by the even more exploited and cheaper labor power of women and children) component of a large operation.

Academic social scientists and historians for the most part have found it possible to regard this process with neutrality and equanimity as being outside their own personal experience or concern. With an almost equal indifference, they have watched the diminution of different groups of the so-called white-collar professional employees—the hospital workers, teachers, bank clerks, and others discussed by Harry Braverman in his *Labor and Monopoly Capital,* by R. Fraser in his Penguin study, *Work,* some years ago, and in the July-August 1976 issue of MONTHLY REVIEW. The "immiseration" of these groups, the loss of a sense of wholeness in their professional work in the process of being reduced to the performance of increasingly narrow tasks,

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and the requirement that they exercise little more than vigilance and manual dexterity in their jobs, have passed beneath the notice of those who should presumably be sensitive to the implications of such processes. In fact, the social commentators have for the most part failed to comment on the gradual extension of the principle which aims to convert those with manual and intellectual skills in society into the manageable and amenable instruments of the business sector.

Our own university teaching and research profession is now under similar pressure, and to an ever-increasing degree. Many have already gone a long way to an acceptance of the influence and control of corporate society. They have become the contracted servants of business, carrying out its organized research, and on the way suppressing ethical objections which may have presented themselves. Others who have not accepted a subaltern role in the business world, have nevertheless played into its hands by diminishing their capacities in restricted over-specialized fields of study. Rather like the worker on the assembly line, the university professional is losing a sense of wholeness. With the closing in of our horizons, we begin to lose our faculty to reflect, to question, to criticize. Almost imperceptibly we become more and more tractable to the system.

Here in Quebec in the last few months the issue of the university's role in monopoly-capitalist society has come to the surface with the fight by academic staff in the Université Laval for the right to a greater measure of participation in decision-making. A strike there which has lasted some months has become sufficiently serious in its implications for even the English-speaking Montreal *Gazette,* a newspaper not particularly noted for its radical view, to make the following comment:

> At Laval, job classification, job security, and faculty representation on the policy-making boards of the university are the main issues.
>
> To many on the Laval campus, the strike represents a clash between the bureaucratic forces in the administration who would seek to arbitrarily impose curriculum and personnel on the institution to reflect the thinking of the board of directors and its business and industry representatives.

The academic community—whose newly formed union has continued to attract new members as the strike is prolonged—is clearly aware of the real meaning of the struggle, as the *Gazette's* editorial points out:

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In a recent letter to *Le Devoir* [a Montreal French-language daily], three eminent professors . . . wrote about the danger for the future of Quebec society in attempts by "bureaucratic power to transform the university into an industrial plant."

For the teachers on strike, the role of professor is to engage in various types of research and prepare the young to run society and change it. They see the administrators in the role of those resisting change, seeking to produce more functionaries to suit the needs of corporate boardrooms and public services.*

It is here, then, that Navarro is completely to the point when he writes that, "bureaucracies are not the owners or controllers but the administrators of the system." They are, in fact, the institutional channels which communicate objectively the needs and wishes of the corporate power groups to the rest of an increasingly dependent and, unhappily, receptive society. That which the industrial and commercial sector accepts or considers of use to its profit-oriented operations is translated by the bureaucratic institutions of society into the orthodox wisdom and the accepted norms to which all must adhere. The struggle of the Université Laval professors is precisely against the obliteration of the wholeness of their work, and its replacement by a form of output which is "planned, measurable, uniform and faceless."**

Vicente Navarro has written of the dependency created by corporate power on the consumption side. The fight of the Laval community against the power of dominant business interests and their bureaucracy represents a determined effort to stop, or at least slow down, the process on the production side, a process which was written about with such clarity nearly 130 years ago in the *Communist Manifesto*: "The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science into its paid wage-laborers."

The point, of course, is not for the academic community to try to hang on to its special prerogatives and privileges in society as the means of maintaining its independence of corporate influence. Rather, it must forge new instruments and ideas as the

---

* The Montreal *Gazette*, editorial, November 5, 1976. It is ironic and worth noting that a number of academics were elected as candidates of the social democratic Parti Québécois (which came to power in November) while on strike against the university administration.

** Quoted in Joan Greenbaum's "Division of Labor in the Computer Field," MONTHLY REVIEW, July-August 1976, p. 52.

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basis for interpreting and understanding the system of corporate capitalism so as to change it. The struggle of the Laval community takes some of us, at least, another step along the path.

P.S. The strike of the professors at Laval has been settled with concessions on all sides, but with the professors, supported by the great majority of the student body, making significant gains in the substantive areas of teaching and research. Extra time was to be spent during the summer of 1977 to allow the students to catch up. The similar strike at UQUAM here in Montreal has even more recently been settled after a period of four months. The positive aspects are those of the great spirit shown by teachers, students, and many non-academic staff, which emerged within the two universities, together with a growing awareness in other universities that the problem is not an isolated one

VICENTE NAVARRO REPLIES

It seems that Gruber and Mandell, besides misreading my article, share what I consider Illich's main ideological flaw, the fetishism of industrialization, i.e., industrialism as an independent force that determines our world of production and consumption. In an Illich-type statement, they write that "*regardless* [emphasis mine] of who owns and controls the productive apparatus, the reliance upon the infinite production of industrial goods and social technologies negates any intention of improving the quality of life within society." Consequently, they also seem to share Illich's solutions for our pains and problems, i.e., to change life-styles and (by quoting approvingly from Illich, p. 271) to lower expectations, since there is a need to recognize "the natural boundaries of human endeavor . . . and translate it into politically determined limits." How those policies, also advocated by Nixon, Ford, and now Carter, can be seen as revolutionary politics escapes me.

Regarding the interpretation of our pains and problems, Gruber, Mandell, and Illich seem not to realize that the nature, type, and consequences of industrialization (or any other component of the process of production) cannot be understood independently of the pattern of class relations and controls that determine it. Thus, any revolutionary change—a qualitative change

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from one type of society to another, from one set of values to another, from one type of industrialization to another—requires a change in the pattern of control over the means and processes of production from one social class to another. And this is obvious from Marx's perceptive observation that "the class which has the means of material production has control at the same time over the means of mental production." In order to change the latter, there is a need to change the former. To change the control over the means of production is, in summary, a necessary although not a sufficient condition for revolutionary changes in politics and culture. It is because of this that I consider the exclusive focus of the *campagne de bataille* on the sphere of consumption, *independently* of the world of production (as in the writing of Illich and his supporters), to be the negation of the need and possibility for *any revolutionary change*. Moreover, I consider that the focus on the individual response (as in life-style politics) rather than on the collective and class-related response is a further denial of the need and possibility of politics. As Gramsci indicated, politics is the *collective* realization of class struggle in all spheres of our lives.

Which leads me to Fetscher's comments. He agrees with me that one of the major weaknesses in Illich's analysis is his lack of awareness of the socio-economic determinants of individual behavior. But still he sees merit in Illich's reliance on individual response. Here is where I disagree. What Illich is saying I consider characteristic of the religious paradigms, i.e., the way of changing society is by first changing ourselves (and one by one, at that). Disagreeing with this, I consider that the only way of changing ourselves is by changing society. As Fanon indicated, it is in the process of struggling for change in the pattern of class relations in our societies that those involved in the struggle change themselves. And that struggle cannot be individual, but has to be collective, based on the commonality of interest of that collectivity, primarily defined in terms of class interests. Again, an individual response has no political (as opposed to religious) meaning unless it is part of a collective movement of struggle aimed at changing the pattern of class control over the means and over the processes of production, consumption, and legitimation. Here again, changes in these processes cannot take place without changes in the pattern of class controls. In that respect, I fully agree with Fetscher's observation that a socialist society is qualitatively different from a capitalist one. Similarly, I consider that socialist

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medicine is far more than bourgeois medicine better distributed. Actually, it is not a question of *more* but a question of *different*. Socialist medicine would be part of a massive process of democratization, with the transformation of the people from passive recipients to active agents in the redefinition of health, medicine, and its institutions: a transformation that takes place as part and parcel of their becoming the agents and not the subjects of history. But, for that transformation to take place, there is a need for a massive and collective political response, not an individual self-centered one.

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(Continued from inside front cover)
accepts this class's dominance as given. But anyway this was not the issue in the case of the article in question. The author happens to be a foreigner living in France who for good and obvious reasons does not wish to come to the attention of the French political police. We do not know what his party politics are, or indeed even if he has any connection to any party. We know the people who sent us the article as good socialists (with a small s), and we found the article useful and informative. We do not encourage anonymity, but we recognize that there are valid reasons for respecting it and will do so when the situation seems to require it. This has been MR policy from the beginning.

An unfortunate error crept into Rod Aya's review of *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* by Hindess and Hirst. The sentence on p. 40, 9 lines from the bottom, which reads "At most they serve to solve it," should read "At most they serve to demarcate the problem at issue, not to solve it." This illustrates one of the pitfalls of proof-reading. The proof-reader normally looks for typographical errors or anomalies. What happened in this case is that the printer left out part of a line, but what survived is in and of itself a perfectly grammatical sentence. It is very hard for proof-readers—and in MR's case everything goes through two or (more usually) three proof-readings—to spot errors of this kind.

The Department of Sociology of the State University of New York at Binghamton is sponsoring (May 5-7) a Conference on "New Directions in the Labor Process." The conference, in the words of the Department's announcement, will bring together "people concerned with the development of the labor process under modern capitalism. It takes its immediate inspiration from the work of Harry Braverman. We plan to honor his memory by examining not only those issues raised directly in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, but related issues of class consciousness and culture as well." Paul Sweezy will be one of the speakers on the "Welcoming Remarks" panel on Friday evening, May 5. For further information and registration forms write to: Dept. of Sociology, SUNY-Binghamton, N.Y. 13901.

Ann Shipley, an old and valued friend who worked in the MR office as a volunteer for many years before moving to Florida to live with a son, died on February 20th from complications following a bout of pneumonia. Ann was 89 years old and had done volunteer work with the Friends Service Committee right up to her last illness. Those of us who knew her before she left for Florida mourn her loss and extend our condolences to her family and the many friends she made in her new home.

The Indochina Resource Center, which did such valuable work during the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, has changed its name to Southeast Asia Resource Center and has broadened its focus accordingly. Its regular publication is *Southeast Asia Chronicle* (prices: single copies—$1; regular subscription—$8; low income—$6; foreign—$10; foreign airmail—$15; libraries and institutions—$12). The December 1977 issue of *SAC* is devoted to the "Human Rights Issue" as it affects Southeast Asia, and contains much material valuable for all engaged in the anti-imperialist struggle. Address: P.O. Box 4000D, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Chilean refugees holding valid work cards are desperately in need of jobs in the New York metropolitan area. If you know of any openings requiring minimal English, call the Office for Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Chile (Ophrich) at 212-929-0919 or 212-929-3951.

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